

It is hard to believe that it has been 1 year since the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria—ISIS, ISIL, or whatever you want to call them—began making headlines in American newspapers. It is hard to believe that it has been nearly 1½ years since the Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee that it was “likely ISIL will attempt to take territory in Iraq and Syria.”

But it goes back even farther. In January 2014, the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq said the Islamic State is “capable of taking and holding ground and causing a lot of trouble.” In November 2013, a State Department official testified before a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee and specifically cited the ineffectiveness of Iraq’s military.

Then Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Iraq and Iran said: “ISIL has benefited from a permissive operating environment due to inherent weaknesses of Iraqi security forces.”

Mr. Speaker, all of these warnings occurred after Iraq’s Prime Minister made an appeal to President Obama to help defeat the growing threat to his country. That was 2 years ago; so here we are.

In June 2015, the leader of the free world tells an international conference in Austria that the United States does not have a complete strategy to defeat an enemy he once called a JV squad. Well, that JV squad is responsible for the horrific murders of American citizens.

That JV squad has overtaken territory fought so hard for by American troops, territory that nearly 4,500 American servicemen and -women died to protect in the most violent battles witnessed by U.S. troops since the Vietnam war. That JV squad waves black flags while driving stolen military equipment through streets where Americans made the ultimate sacrifice.

From overlooked redlines to bypassed deadlines, the Obama administration will serve as a case study in how not to conduct foreign policy for future world leaders.

Today, the President wants us to believe that his administration’s negotiations with Iran are in Israel’s best interests. Ironically, Israel’s Prime Minister made a direct appeal to the American people expressing the contrary.

This past March, Prime Minister Netanyahu petitioned Congress from the podium right behind me because he, like so many, has lost faith in the abilities of our Commander in Chief.

He is right; he is right to be skeptical about the State Department’s “trust above all else” policy with Iran, whose leaders have publicly proclaimed their desire for Israel to be wiped off the map. Mr. Netanyahu has rightly questioned America’s once unwavering commitment to his homeland, Israel—our partner, our ally, but, most importantly, our friend.

As I have said before, for those who do not believe in the United States’

moral obligation to protect Israel, I remind them about the United States’ strategic obligation. Israel benefits from a secure America, just as America benefits in having a secure, stable, and trustworthy ally in a very volatile and dangerous region of the world.

The Obama administration’s inability to realize this twofold bond between the United States and Israel illustrates their lack of understanding. I suggest to the President and his advisers that, if they really want to salvage any remaining trace of foreign policy competence for their history books, they walk away from this deal.

I urge our President to pause and reflect on America’s role in the world. Mr. Speaker, I urge him to reassess our courses of action abroad. The President must start by determining what is important for America. Only then will he be capable of developing a strategy, let alone the right one.

In God we trust.

REAUTHORIZE THE ESEA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. COSTELLO) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, across my congressional district, elementary and secondary school students are packing up their lockers, taking final exams, and saying goodbye to their classmates and homeroom desks for the summer.

While our students head into a well-deserved summer recess, our teachers have already started thinking ahead to the next academic year, setting up lesson plans and figuring out what their course curriculums will be.

Unfortunately, many of our teachers will be faced with yet another year of stifling one-size-fits-all testing requirements and deadlines. Instead of enabling our teachers to do what they love and inspiring our children to learn and succeed, they are forced to waste classroom time by preparing and administering redundant and often low-quality tests.

Mr. Speaker, it has been nearly 15 weeks since I last spoke on the House floor about the need to provide relief from burdensome testing requirements for our teachers, students, and parents.

At the time, the House was actively considering H.R. 5, legislation to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as well as an amendment I was pleased to offer with my Democratic colleague, SUZANNE BONAMICI of Oregon. Our bipartisan amendment, which was adopted and included as part of H.R. 5, offers a solution to the overtesting problem that is taxing our schools and teachers.

Our amendment empowers teachers and parents by giving existing Federal funding to State and local education agencies to develop curriculum plans to make better use of tests for the students, with the ability to reduce testing.

It would also allow for quicker delivery of assessment data to educators and parents and a more qualitative analysis of how to shape curriculum for that student from the local school district and parent, not the Federal Government.

Mr. Speaker, we need to continue our work on this bill and reauthorize the ESEA. We owe it to our colleagues who have worked for months on this bill and underlying policy. We owe it to our teachers who have dedicated their livelihood and careers to the betterment of our children.

Most of all, we owe it to our children, who deserve the best possible education that we can provide, an education that encourages them to think, learn, and succeed and not that simply tells them how to fill in the blanks on a generic test.

For those of my colleagues who may be undecided on advancing this bill and reauthorizing the ESEA, I ask you to consider: Are you happy with the status quo? Are you content to sit on the sidelines while Common Core standards and a myriad of tests are imposed on our students?

I would like to read into the RECORD a letter I received from the superintendent of my home school district. Let me preface this by saying it was not written to me as a Member of Congress, but rather as a taxpayer in the West Chester Area School District.

I read this because there is no better example of a need and an opportunity for us to help our families back home do our job and govern here in Congress. It reads:

Dear Parents, many of us are quick to fault the U.S. public education system, comparing it to other smaller European countries and finding deficits and gaps. The system and the way it is funded are far from perfect. However, we manage to educate generations of children who go on to do incredible things.

Now, we are asking our students to do something that is entirely unfair: to spend weeks and weeks filling in bubbles, taking standardized tests, and having their entire educational ambition directed toward passing them. This is not what public education was intended to do, nor should do.

As the superintendent of the West Chester Area School District, I believe in very high standards for our students. I believe in accountability. I do believe that tests can be a good thing, but not the way we are being forced by the government to give them.

We officially began the PSSA testing window on April 13, and we will continue to test through May 27, when we finish with the high school Keystone Exams, a new graduation requirement. Beginning with the class of 2017, even a straight-A student who doesn’t do well on these tests won’t receive a diploma under State law.

State and federally mandated testing has been around for a long time, and is certainly here to stay, but it has become a massive burden that is stifling creativity and love of teaching and learning.

While our district has embraced high standards and accountability, we now spend the first 7 months of the school year preparing to take three standardized tests; then we spend approximately 6 weeks giving tests to students. Unlike private and parochial

schools, public schools are mandated to use these tests to determine graduation for students and for teacher and administrator evaluations. It is positively stressing us—and our system—to the max.

Our teachers, students, and parents all say the extreme amount of time focused on testing is causing ridiculous amounts of stress in the classroom, faculty room, and at home. The angst is palpable as you walk through our hallways.

Where is there time for creativity in teaching? Where is there time for exploration and collaboration? Our talented staff do their very best to find ways to incorporate what needs to be tested into their dynamic lesson plans, but it is difficult, given the time constraints and enormous amount of material being covered.

Ultimately, that negativity is going to drive down our test scores. Learning should be challenging, but also enjoyable and exciting. Teaching should be dynamic and creative. We are missing that because of these tests.

I am not advocating a system without any testing, rigor, or accountability, but what we are doing right now isn't working.

Teachers have literally sent me hundreds of examples of how students are worried, anxious, and depressed. The rules for taking these exams are crazy as well.

Springtime in a school should be full of excitement and learning—not anymore. The last 3 weeks, our schools have looked more like prisons than educational institutions. The rules allow students to take as much time as they need, but once they close the booklet, the session is over, and they can't return to it.

Let's reauthorize the ESEA. Let's reduce the Federal footprint over public education. It is the right thing to do.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 11 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker at noon.

PRAYER

Rabbi Claudio Kogan, Temple Emanuel, McAllen, Texas, offered the following prayer:

Our God and God of our ancestors, God of compassion, God of justice, and God of peace.

In this great Hall where dreams come true, we ask Your blessings upon these great men and women, the Representatives of the people. They have devoted their lives to our welfare. Give them wisdom and courage. Inspire them with the teachings of our prophets, as they answer Isaiah's call to feed the hungry and clothe the naked, Jeremiah's request to protect the orphan and the widow, and Ezekiel's plea to lift up those who cannot stand on their own in this land and all lands.

As an immigrant who came to this country 16 years ago and became an American citizen just 2 years ago, I join this House in a prayer of profound gratitude and deep appreciation for the blessings we, the people of the United States of America, are privileged to enjoy. I ask You, God, to let the lights of truth and harmony shine from this Chamber as beacons for the betterment of all Americans.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER. The question is on the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to clause 8, rule XX, further proceedings on this question are postponed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Montana (Mr. ZINKE) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. ZINKE led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

WELCOMING RABBI CLAUDIO KOGAN

The SPEAKER. Without objection, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) is recognized for 1 minute.

There was no objection.

Mr. HINOJOSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Rabbi Claudio Kogan from Temple Emanuel in McAllen, Texas, for his service today as guest chaplain.

A native of Argentina, Rabbi Kogan and his wife, Anna, immigrated to the United States where he continued his studies, receiving several master's degrees.

Rabbi Kogan has served congregations all over the United States. He has worked to develop a strong interfaith connection with his Christian and Muslim counterparts. He has received numerous awards for his essays on religion and ethics.

In addition to his rabbinical duties, Rabbi Kogan is also a medical doctor. He has been a high school teacher in Cincinnati, Ohio, and has combined his

religious and medical training by serving as a hospital chaplain at a variety of institutions.

Rabbi Kogan is joined here today by his lovely wife, Anna, and his two beautiful children, Milena and Ezekiel.

I want to thank him for his prayer and for his service to my community.

RESIGNATION AS MEMBER OF COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YODER) laid before the House the following resignation as a member of the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, June 10, 2015.

Hon. JOHN BOEHNER,
Speaker, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR SPEAKER BOEHNER: I write to offer my official resignation as a member of the House Committee on Science, Space & Technology, effective today, June 10, 2015. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve on this committee over the last four years.

Sincerely,

STEVEN M. PALAZZO,
Member of Congress.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the resignation is accepted. There was no objection.

ELECTING CERTAIN MEMBERS TO STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Republican Conference, I offer a privileged resolution and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 304

Resolved, That the following named Members be, and are hereby, elected to the following standing committees of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE: Mr. Kelly of Mississippi.

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY: Mr. Abraham.

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS: Mr. Kelly of Mississippi.

Ms. FOXX (during the reading). Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the resolution be considered as read and printed in the RECORD.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from North Carolina?

There was no objection.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will entertain up to 15 further requests for 1-minute speeches on each side of the aisle.